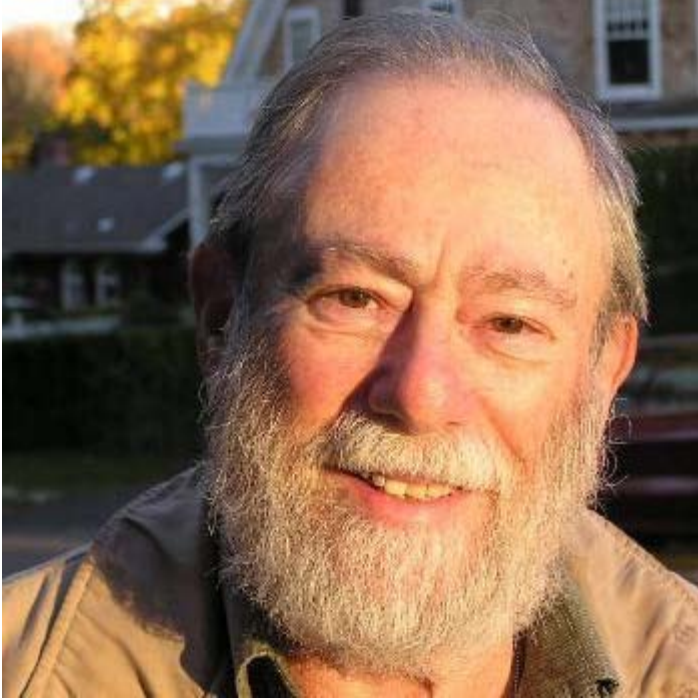


Alfred University mourns passing of poet Marvin Bell, 1958 graduate

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Marvin Bell '58

IOWA CITY, IA – The Alfred University community is mourning the passing of alumnus and renowned American poet Marvin Bell '58, who died Monday, Dec. 14, in Iowa City, IA, at age 83.

Both a teacher and a poet of international renown, Bell was the author of more than 20 books of poetry, including *Vertigo: The Living Dead Man Poems*; *Mars Being Red*; and *Nightworks: Poems, 1962-2000*. He also founded the magazine *Statements* and edited it while living in Rochester, NY, after graduating from Alfred with a bachelor's degree in English.

The first Poet Laureate of Iowa, Bell and his wife, Dorothy, lived in Iowa City, as well as in Port Townsend, WA, and Long Island, NY. He also is survived by two sons, Nathan and Jason.

“Alfred University extends its heartfelt condolences to Marvin’s family,” President Mark Zupan today. “We will always be proud and grateful to count Marvin as a graduate of our University, especially given that our mission is to transform student lives and better our world. Marvin made our world a better place through his impactful writing and humanity.”

Bell taught for 40 years at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, retiring as the Flannery O'Connor Professor of Letters. Over a long teaching career, he also held visiting lectureships at numerous universities, and was admired as both a poet and scholar of poetry by his colleagues and legions of students.

In 1986, he received an honorary degree in Humane Letters from Alfred University, and he returned to Alfred University in 2002 to deliver the spring commencement address. His speech was subsequently published in the anthology, *Take This Advice: The Most Nakedly Honest Graduation Speeches Ever Given*. He was in good company, with the anthology including addresses by Salman Rushdie and Toni Morrison.

But it was as a poet that Bell is best remembered. Alfred University Professor Emeritus Ben Howard describes Bell as a “boldly original poet, who brought wit, daring, and a generosity of spirit to contemporary American poetry.”

His work has been described as “versatile” and “high-spirited,” ranging from the comic to the tragic. In his mature years, he created his own poetic form, which he dubbed “Dead Man Poem.” In response, the scholar and critic Judith Kitchen wrote that Bell had “redefined poetry as it is being practiced today.”

Bell told the poet and Alfred University alumnus Jason Gray '98 his first encounter with working artists took place on the Alfred University campus when he arrived as a first-year undergraduate in the mid-50s. He was not writing poetry, but showed an interest in journalism and served as editor Alfred University's student newspaper, *The Fiat Lux*.

He was struck to be suddenly in the company of writers and studio artists, all at work on their art. “The writers, the artists at Alfred— they were a revelation to me. The artists already had the fulfilling work of a lifetime to do.”

Bell was born in Center Moriches, Long Island, and served in the U.S. Army from 1964-65. In addition to graduating with a B.A. from Alfred University, he received a master's degree from the University of Chicago and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Iowa.